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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000150

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STATE FOR DS/IP/WHA, DS/DSS/ITA AND WHA/BSC MDASCHBACH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2034
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SNAR](#) [PA](#)
SUBJECT: CONVICTED NARCOS AND KIDNAPPER ESCAPE PARAGUAYAN
POLICE CUSTODY

Classified By: DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Two convicted Brazilian narcotics traffickers and a convicted kidnapper escaped March 6 from a maximum-security police detention facility in Asuncion. Narcotrafficker Nilton Antunez Veron, a member of the Sao Paulo-based First Capital Brigade (PCC), narcotrafficker Eder Pedro de Ferrato, and Agustin Baez Rios, who was convicted in the kidnapping of Japanese businessman Hirokazu Ota, took one police officer hostage and released him before shooting their way out of the facility. A fourth inmate, ex-police officer turned convicted kidnapper Carmelo Ortiz, tried to escape but was wounded by police and recaptured. (NOTE: The Specialized Group police unit's maximum-security facility is one of Paraguay's most secure detention centers, and houses over 160 of the country's most dangerous criminals. The escape follows a March 3 riot in the same facility that left one inmate hospitalized with severe injuries. The escapees are major criminals. Pedro de Ferrato's narco-partner, Mendez Mesquita, was extradited to the U.S. in 2005, and is now doing hard time in U.S. prison. END NOTE.)

¶2. (U) Paraguayan National Police Commissioner Viviano Machado relieved from duty three senior police officers March 8 who were responsible for the facility at the time of the break out, and arrested 30 police officers for reportedly letting the fugitives escape. Prosecutor Ramona Dominguez opened an investigation March 9 against nine police officers and "sex worker" Liliana Ferreira, who reportedly visited the escapees and provided them with a firearm used during the breakout. Dominguez is investigating claims that the officers permitted Ferreira to visit the fugitives after visiting hours.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The Lugo government has taken steps to improve prison security and fight corruption in the police ranks. Its strong response to the escape underscore this commitment. Nevertheless, this escape of high-profile convicts from what many consider Paraguay's most secure detention facility with likely police involvement is a setback to Interior Minister Rafael Filizzola and Machado in their fight to clean up Paraguayan law enforcement. Paraguayan law enforcement will devote valuable resources seeking to recapture the fugitives instead of other priorities. END COMMENT.

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